



# EPA eyes 170 homes for 2005

## ■ Feds to begin looking at Troy

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Western News Reporter

The Environmental Protection Agency's Libby cleanup project met its 2004 goal of 170 properties cleaned of asbestos-contaminated vermiculite, local EPA manager Jim Christiansen told the Lincoln County Commissioners on Wednesday.

A similar number of homes is targeted for cleanup this year, Christiansen said.

"We'll still shape and refine that depending on how much money we get," he said.

The agency has expressed a commitment to maintaining the current funding level of \$17 million per year, Christiansen said.

A new contracting system put into place last year, which saw three firms

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bidding on packages of work, helped bring prices down while getting things done more quickly and efficiently, Christiansen said. The average cost for a residential cleanup fell below \$40,000 and approached the targeted \$30,000 near the end of the year.

No surprises are seen on the horizon for this year, Christiansen said.

"I think we'll have a good sound productive year," he said.

Christiansen said the agency will be working toward the development of a final cleanup plan this year. Additional sampling is planned for the summer months to answer specific questions about cleanup procedures, and more community involvement will be sought.

Staff will be gathering data this year to lay the groundwork for the expansion of the cleanup to the Troy area, Christiansen said. Screening of Troy properties is tentatively planned for 2006 with cleanup to begin in 2007.

If all goes well, the entire pro-

ject will be wrapping up in 2008. That will depend on three factors, Christiansen said. The first is the number of homes that can be cleaned in one year regardless of funding, and that seems to be somewhere between 200 and 250, Christiansen said. The second is the actual funding allocated to the project. The third is the final number of properties that will be cleaned, and that remains to be set but is still expected to be 1,200 to 1,400, Christiansen said.

Christiansen also updated the commissioners on the issue of where the agency and its contractors rent vehicles for the local project. The commissioners had previously expressed concerns that the vehicles were being rented from outside the county.

Christiansen said he's been working with CDM, the firm providing most of the overhead for the project, toward renting vehicles locally and is seeing some progress toward leasing more vehicles locally.

"It's a step in the right direction," he said.

CDM provided some resistance at the corporate level because of insurance issues relating to national contracts that aren't available locally, Christiansen said. While the insurance issues need to be resolved, the actual rental rate from local companies is better than what has been available from national firms and should save money, Christiansen said.

"It saves a lot of money according to what my preliminary investigation shows," said Commissioner John Konzen.